

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President, members of the body, I rise in support of this amendment. I think it is a fair amendment. Senator Schmit, I don't believe it is a buy out. I think it is a fair thing to do and we should be doing it. When a tax increase takes place, the wholesalers need a little extra time. This is because the retailers load up at the old rate and these wholesalers run out of cigarettes. So we need to help them out a little. This gives them an additional two weeks of such wholesalers average purchase of these tax stamps. We must remember, and I want to remind you this morning that these tobacco wholesalers collect a lot of tax dollars for Nebraska. They collect a lot of tax dollars for our state. In fact, did you know that for every penny we have on cigarettes, every penny tax, that we receive about approximately 1.6 million dollars. So you can see that we are talking about a lot of money. So I would encourage you and urge you to support the Vard Johnson...Senator Vard Johnson's amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you, Senator Hefner. Senator Hannibal, please, followed by Senators Labeledz, Ashford and Schmit.

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I rise to oppose the Vard Johnson amendment as well. As Senator Schmit said, Senator Johnson did explain the amendment quite well and did, in fact, tell you exactly what the ramifications are. As Senator Schmit himself said, he gave most of the reasons, if not all of the reasons why I also am opposed to this amendment. It is unfortunate that we can't have a tax and decide it is good public policy and just do it. I am going to be opposed to the bill. And we don't need to talk about the merits of the bill right now. But at the very least I think that if you are going to impose this tax, if you think this is indeed good public policy, at the very least I don't think it is necessary to have a partner in selling this bill by putting back \$250,000 back in the hands of the wholesaler on what I would consider a windfall just so that we can have support for the bill out here on the floor. I think it is a very bad policy. I think if you are going to support the bill, support the bill. If you are against the bill, be against the bill, but be for the right reasons, either way, or for good reasons, not because we have somebody bought into a bill and have a windfall situation. I think it is wrong policy. One question I would like to pose to Senator Johnson, if he would yield to a question,.... Senator Johnson, I believe the committee amendments, the original bill had this exemption in the bill, is that correct?